

## Talk of the Town by mayfixlds

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**Summary:**

Joyce Byers was used to being the talk of the town. All the gossip surrounding her failed marriage to Lonnie, the disappearance of her youngest son and the death of Bob had caused quite the stir over the last few years and she'd become immune to it all.

This however, this she wanted to be kept under the radar for as long as possible.

# Talk of the Town

## Author's Note:

Hello!

This is my first fic in around 8 years and also my first ever Jopper and Stranger Things fic. When I used to write before it was on a different website too so I'm trying to navigate my way around this one. I'm a little rusty but have so many ideas and Jopper HCs that I needed a place to get them out!

I don't have a proof reader either so if there is any mistakes do let me know!

I hope you like this, feedback is appreciated :)

It wasn't exactly a secret that after the events of 1983 (and a little bit before, if she was being honest) Joyce Byers had been dubbed as Hawkins 'crazy lady'. If she hadn't already known this from all the rumours that were overheard from working in Melvald's then she definitely would've known from the looks that people gave her and the way their tone would change when they spoke to her. They treated her as though she was going to break down at any moment and spoke to her the same way Karen Wheeler spoke to little Holly.

It also wasn't a secret that Police Chief Jim Hopper had been the talk of the town when he had taken time off work in August 1985 and shown up two weeks later with his illegitimate daughter Jane, whom after her mothers passing away and her aunts inability to look after her had been sent to live with the father she had known nothing about.

Well, that was the story anyway. Joyce and El had had a good laugh at the first lot of rumours as they'd started to pile in and Hopper didn't mind. He knew that story was the one that would keep El the safest and that was his main priority. What anyone else said about him wasn't worth getting upset over. Not as long as his kid was safe.

Joyce didn't really care what the town had to say, either. She didn't necessarily like it but she had been the centre of gossip for so long what with everything that happened with Lonnie, then with Will, the death of Bob and of course the newest gossip being that her and the police chief had shacked up and were raising their little makeshift family, so she'd learnt to tune it out.

This however, *this*, she didn't want getting out to anyone until absolutely necessary and that posed a problem.

You see Joyce Byers, who had just finished work for the day, stood in the town pharmacy staring at the row of pregnancy tests trying to figure out how a line of boxes could seem so intimidating. Tim, the guy who runs the pharmacy, had smiled at her when she walked in, told her to ring the bell if she needed anything and had gone out to the back room to continue filing prescriptions. He was nice enough, but he liked to chat with everyone that came in and Joyce herself had learnt a few things about other townsfolk from him. She was the only one currently in the store but she'd have to buy from him and this had led to her contemplating how she was going to buy what she needed without starting any more rumours.

Maybe she was worrying for nothing and maybe people didn't care as much as she thought but it was a small town and everyone already had a lot to say about her family and her new relationship that this getting out to the wrong person would add an entire canister of gas to the already pretty wild fire.

"Joyce! Hi" she was pulled out of her thoughts by a very familiar voice and she turned to see Karen Wheeler walking towards her, holding a prescription in one hand and Holly's hand in the other.

Joyce tried to smile at Karen but was sure it came out as more of a grimace and before she could move away from what she had just been looking at, Karen spoke again

"What are you doing here? I hope none of you are getting sick, Holly here has got the most awful cough, I hope Will or Jane haven't picked it up when they've been to the house. She couldn't stop coughing all night last night-" but Karen trailed off as she turned and saw exactly what it was Joyce was here for

"Oh" she said in a quiet voice. Joyce could see her brain working a mile a minute.

"Please don't tell anyone" Joyce begged and she didn't even have the strength to be ashamed of it.

Karen had always been friendly to Joyce and whilst she did like the gossip, from what Joyce knew, Karen had always been respectful and understanding of her and never got involved with Joyce's business unless it was to help. She wouldn't call them *friends* exactly but they had a little code of honour between them being the parents of such good friends.

"Don't tell - of course I wouldn't tell. I was in the same place not so long ago, I won't say anything until you have"

Joyce gave a small smile.

"Are you stuck with which one to buy? I was the same when it was Holly, they've upgraded a lot since the boys were born"

"I was more stuck with how to purchase one without the town finding out immediately what was going on" Joyce muttered, wringing her hands and looking back at the door to the back room which Tim was still in.

"Why didn't you say! I'm sure I have some left at home I didn't use last time. Let me just put this prescription in and then you can come back with me and take the test" Karen smiled reassuringly and Joyce felt a small comfort in her words

"Won't they have expired? Holly is five now" she thought out loud, her brow furrowed

"They're not from Holly" Karen said, smiling again "I thought I was pregnant early last year, but it turned out to be a false alarm. I didn't need to use all the tests"

Joyce waited anxiously while they waited for Holly's prescription and for Karen to pay. She herself purchased some candy that was at the counter for El and Will to make her trip into the store seem as though

it had a purpose.

Eventually however Joyce was in her car, following Karen toward Maple Street. Karen had assured her that Ted was still at work and she knew that Mike would be at AV Club for another half hour because that's where Will (and probably El if she was honest, anywhere Mike was El usually wasn't too far behind) was too.

Joyce waited outside the Wheelers bathroom whilst Karen rummaged around her bedroom. She eventually reappeared holding two pregnancy test boxes and she smiled as she handed them over to her

"Completely in date"

Joyce gave another small smile, took the boxes and headed into the bathroom.

Karen left to put Holly down for a short nap - she had realised that while Joyce wanted someone around, she wanted to be alone whilst she actually took the test.

Holly went to sleep relatively easy, being sick had really taken its toll on the five year old, and Karen made her way into the kitchen to make a pot of coffee for her and Joyce.

Five minutes later, a terrified looking Joyce Byers walked into the kitchen to find Karen sat at the table.

"They're positive" Joyce mumbled, slumping down in the chair opposite Karen.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Karen asked, not wanting to push her

"Not really" Joyce sighed "I just wasn't expecting it. It's not something that was in the plans or something I thought would happen again"

It was quiet for a moment

"You need to go home and talk to Jim" Karen said after a while "You can talk to me if you want but he's the only one here who can help

you in the way you need. He needs to know so you can decide what your next course of action is. I'd be more than happy to have Will and Jane over for dinner tonight if them being out of the house would help?"

Joyce nodded "Thank you, Karen" she said, the sincerity obvious in her tone "For all of this and for being so understanding"

"Anytime" Karen reassured her, before standing up to see Joyce out.

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Joyce knew that if she went home and was left alone in an empty house for hours it would only make her go stir crazy so she stopped by the station on the way home. She needed to see Hopper and she knew she couldn't wait very long to do so.

'He's busy' Flo said when she saw Joyce walk through the front door.

'Tell him I need to see him' Joyce said, not moving from her spot in the doorway 'It's a family emergency'

Flo sighed but picked up the phone and rang through to Hoppers office, repeating to him what Joyce had said. Less than a minute after Flo had hung up, Hopper was coming round the corner, moving a little faster than normal.

'What's wrong?!' he asked, his voice frantic as he came toward her 'Is it Jane? or Will?'

'Jane is fine' Joyce told him calmly 'We all are' she saw him visibly relax at her words but he was searching her face for something

'Can I talk to you outside for a minute please?'she asked him, catching Flo staring at them both intently.

He nodded and followed her as she turned to walk out of the door.

'I can't tell you out here' Joyce said before he could even speak. The

concern and curiosity on his face only grew. She'd stopped by the Blazer and the car gave them only a little privacy from the rest of the street 'I want to be at home. Can you try to get off early today please?'

'Joyce is everything okay with you?' he was frowning and looking intently at her face, as if looking for any thing out of place

'I'm not hurt or anything if thats what you're thinking' She reassured him 'I just need to talk to you about something important and I need you to come home now'

'It's been quiet today so I can get Callahan to cover for me for the rest of the day. I'll just tidy up some paperwork and I'll follow you home' he pulled her into his arms at that, her head resting on his chest. She stayed there for a while, letting the smell of him - cigarettes and coffee - calm her momentarily. He placed a kiss on the top of her head.

'Let me go and speak to them inside and I'll be home in a half hour okay?' He pulled away from her and she looked up at his face, still so full of concern, and nodded. He gave her a quick kiss before walking back into the station and heading toward Flo's desk to explain the situation.

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Joyce had been home about twenty minutes when she heard the Blazer pull up outside. She was pouring herself a cup of coffee in the kitchen and upon hearing Hopper's arrival, she pulled out another cup and poured one for him too.

By the time he had hung up his hat and jacket and toed off his boots, Joyce was sat at the table, her hands wrapped around a mug.

'What's going on here Joyce? Where are the kids?' Hopper asked, taking a seat and reaching for the second cup of coffee on the table.

‘At the Wheelers. Karen is going to have both of them over for dinner’

He nodded and there was silence for a moment. Joyce trying to figure out what to say and Hopper studying her face as if it could provide him with answers. He caved first.

‘What’s wrong?’

‘I’m pregnant’

Hopper let out a breath ‘Shit’

‘Yeah’

‘You sure?’

‘I haven’t been to the doctor yet but I took two tests and they were both positive’ Joyce told him, she took another sip of coffee.

Hopper sighed and sat back in his chair rubbing his hands over his eyes. He reached toward his front pocket as if to get a cigarette but seemed to remember what it was he had just been told and who was in the room with him.

There was silence again. Uncomfortable this time.

“I don’t know what to do, Hop’ Joyce said after a while. Her voice cracked on the last word “I had my boys. When times were tough and Lonnie was being an absolute asshole I still had my boys and gave them a chance and I know I should give this baby a chance too but I’m scared”

“I know, Joyce, me too” he reached out for her hand, holding it in both of his.

“We live in a town where I have witnessed the most horrible things and I live every day in fear that they’re not completely gone. Also we haven’t been together that long and we’re doing so good and babies are stressful. Something always comes along and pulls us apart and I’m worried the stress of this will be that next thing” she took a deep



breath, rearranging her thoughts "Not to mention the lack of space. Jonathan moving away meant El could have his room which was great when you moved in and I guess if the baby is a girl her and El can share but if it's a boy there won't be room for it to share with Will and Jonathan when he comes home for the holidays. We'd have to get a bigger place and I don't know if I can afford that and a baby" her voice was frantic and it took Hopper calling her name three times before she realised he was trying to speak too.

"All of those things scare me too, Joyce, but I'm not planning on going anywhere. This thing between us? It might be new but it's only a newer version. My feelings for you have always been there since the days we would make out after sharing cigarettes between fifth and sixth. We weren't right then but we are now and if we have this kid I'll be there the whole time I swear it" He'd moved so he was kneeling next to her and had taken her hands in his again 'You don't have to do this alone. You're not alone with raising this kid and you won't be alone with any of the financial stuff. I can finally sell my trailer and the cabin and I have some money saved. We'll be careful with it but it will work' His tone softened as he continued "I'm worried too. I love El so much but I never knew her when she was Sarah's age. It scares me that I'll be raising a kid from scratch and doing all of those first milestones again but if there's anyone I'd wanna do that with - if there's anyone I know I could do that with again - it would be you"

Joyce was quiet for a moment, letting his words wash over her. She knew he was being genuine. He'd experienced just as much loss and pain as she had and he knew better than anyone else she knew how that felt. She didn't doubt his feelings for her for one minute and she knew any child of his would never be left by him - not if he had any say in the matter.

"We still have a lot to discuss and we definitely have a lot to sort out but...okay"

"Okay?" he let out a breath

"Okay."

“So were doing this?” Hopper asked her, his hands leaving hers coming down to rest on her abdomen “We’re having a baby?”

Joyce nodded, the first genuine smile of the day on her face “We’re having a baby. Now get up and kiss me’

He stood up then, rejoining their hands as he helped her from her seat. When they were both upright, she let go and put her arms around his shoulders, stood on her tip toes, and promptly pulled herself closer into him, drawing their faces together and letting her lips meet his.

“There’s one more thing” Joyce said after a little while, pulling away slightly.

Hopper frowned ‘What is that?’

“We gotta tell the kids”

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They’d decided to wait until Jonathan came home for the Christmas break so they could tell all three of them together. They had used this time to attend their first doctors appointment too, in order to make sure that everything was going smoothly. She’d been told that being a little older could potentially lead to a few complications and she absolutely had to stop smoking but they would keep a good eye on her throughout the whole pregnancy and no other complications were immediately present.

Whilst the kids hadn’t asked any questions, Joyce could tell that Will and El knew something was up and that suspicion only increased when her and Hopper called a family meeting the evening of the 22nd - the day Jonathan got back.

“What’s going on, mom?” Jonathan asked, taking a sip out of a bottle of water he’d brought with him when they were all finally seated at the table. He’d spent the afternoon unpacking a little and setting up

the camp bed in Will's room.

"Are you guys breaking up?" El asked, her voice small. There was genuine fear in her eyes and Joyce's heart ached for the little girl.

Hopper went to reassure her but Joyce got there first.

"Of course not Sweetie" she told her 'I love your dad very much and don't plan on leaving him any time soon"

El relaxed and smiled at the woman she had come to see as her adoptive mother.

'We do have some news though' Joyce told them,

'Are you getting married?' Will interrupted

'No it's not that either" Joyce said. Will and Jonathan shared a look at that.

'Then what is it?' Jonathan pressed

'I'd tell you if you'd stop interrupting me'

"What your mom is trying to say is that she's pregnant" Hopper told them before any of the kids could cut them off again

Jonathan dropped his water bottle on the floor.

Will was looking between his mom and Hopper frantically and El looked confused

"What's pregnant?" She asked, turning to Hopper hoping he would define the word

"It means she's going to have a baby, she's going to have another child like she had Jonathan and Will" Hopper explained

"Like mama with me?" El asked, understanding on her face. She remembered seeing her mama's stomach expanded, and the delivery room and the baby version of herself crying before being taken away.

Hopper nodded at his daughter

'Whose the baby's papa?' she asked

"I am, kid"

'How?' she asked again, frowning because she didn't know the answer. Jonathan spluttered slightly and Will blushed bright red. Both actions that left El feeling even more confused.

'We don't need to get into that now' Joyce said, smiling at El 'But you and I can have a talk about all of this at a later date if you'd like' El nodded, smiling at the knowledge that all would be explained to her soon. Jonathan felt sorry for the poor kid, not really aware of the exact talk that was coming her way.

'How did this happen? Do we even have room for a baby, mom?' Jonathan finally spoke up, taking his eyes away from El and fixing them on his mom.

'We're going to see if the baby is a boy or a girl before we make the decision on whether we need to move house' Joyce explained 'If its a girl it can share with El but if it's a boy we will definitely need more room. Hop and I will discuss that if necessary' she informed her

'Will you be okay? Mama wasn't okay after having me' El spoke up again.

Hopper walked over to where El was sat and knelt down so he was at her level. He took her small hands in his and spoke quietly, as if he was only speaking to her.

'Your mama was hurt by the bad men' he told her 'I wont let anyone come near or hurt Joyce. Not ever'

That seemed to be the last thing that was worrying El for after her dad had convinced her Joyce would be safe, she smiled widely and announced 'I hope I get a sister. Theres too many boys' to which everyone laughed

After asking a few more questions, "When will the baby get here?" "What will its name be?" "Why do we have to wait so long?" Will and El excused themselves to call their friends and headed off into El's room.

Jonathan however, remained seated at the table, staring intently at his mother. Hopper could see that he clearly wanted some alone time with Joyce so he mumbled some excuse about needing to check something on the car, stood up from the table himself before leaning down to give Joyce a kiss on her forehead and left, walking out of the front door.

"A baby, Mom?" Jonathan asked once they were alone

"I know"

"A baby"

"I know, Jonathan. I was just as freaked out at first but Jim and I talked and we've decided we want to do this"

"Mom you were so sick when you had Will" he pressed, eyes full of worry 'and I'm not here much anymore, what if you need help with something and I'm all the way in New York?"

"Hopper isn't Lonnie, Jonathan" Joyce said, her voice soft. She knew the fears her eldest son had, and how he was trying to keep them hidden. As soon as she mentioned Lonnie however she saw his face change and knew he had based his concerns on what had happened last time.

'Even if this doesn't work out between us Jim isn't going to leave me alone in this. If I need anything at all he'll be here. I wouldn't have this happen again if I didn't know that in my heart. I wouldn't have let him even stay the night let alone move in - with another child for that matter - if I didn't think that" She reached over to squeeze his hand and he squeezed back, smiling at her slightly

"As long as you're sure" he said, sighing "As long as you're happy"

"I am. I really truly am"

"You have to promise to call me, if you need anything at all" He pressed "And I'll be back for when the baby is born, just to help out for a little"

"You're too good for me" Joyce told her eldest "I know I've relied on you too much over the years and you've always been so willing to put everything aside to help me. I couldn't have done any of this without you Jonathan, nothing at all. But now all I need is for you is to have the time of your life at NYU and try not to worry too much about your silly old Mom"

Jonathan moved into the seat next to her and put his arm around her shoulder, pulling her in close to him

"Okay" he paused "I love you, Mom"

"I love you too. So so much"

They sat in comfortable silence for a short while before Joyce spoke again

'Who knows, you might get a little sister this time' she told him, nudging his shoulder

'I already have one of those' they both smiled at the thought of El.

'Another one, then' she laughed 'It might be nice, we'd have an even household that way. I've always been a little outnumbered. El is right about too many boys' Jonathan laughed but then turned serious again

'Would Hop mind - if it's a girl I mean. After Sara and everything' Jonathan asked, his tone softer now

'We spoke about it briefly. He's scared - we both are, but he knows that there is a 50% chance it's a girl and he said that he's okay with that. We'll take it one day at a time'

"Okay. One day at a time"

"Can I come back now?" Hoppers voice rang out from the front door

Joyce shook her head in exasperation at Jonathan who smiled slightly before they both shouted

"Get in here!"

"Everything good?" Hopper asked, as he appeared in the kitchen

Jonathan stood up and walked toward the Chief, stopping right in front of him "As long as you can promise me you'll be here for her and here for the kid for as long as they both need you, we're all good in here"

Hopper looked at Jonathan, searching his face for something. He seemed to find it because he nodded "I promise, kid. I'll be here. Always"

Jonathan nodded, having received the answer and the sincerity he was looking for. 'Good' he told Hopper, before turning back to his Mom.

"I'm gonna go make sure I unpacked everything" and with that he turned and left the kitchen, heading down the hallway.

Hopper headed toward Joyce after Jonathan had left and pulled her up from out of her seat. He pulled her into his arms and kissed the top of her head before resting his chin there. He held her close, taking in everything he had.

'Hey Hop' she said after a few minutes of peaceful silence. He made a humming sound to indicate that he'd heard her

'We're having a baby'

She felt his face lift as he smiled

'We're having a baby'